Conducting the Worship Service

In the bulletins provided by Ministry by Mail and the Elder Ministry Training website, "L" marks the leader's parts, and "C" marks the congregation's parts. Directions in parentheses, such as "The congregation rises," are instructions and should not be read aloud. The arrows indicate which way the leader should face: an up arrow (▲) means face the altar, and a down arrow (▼) means face the congregation.

Before the service, read the entire bulletin and sermon aloud at least once. Mark the places where the congregation stands or sits, and arrange with the musician or the person handling recorded music when each hymn and sung portion begins. Have the sermon, general prayer, and any announcements at hand. Arrive early enough to check that the correct bulletin has been printed, that the hymn board numbers are posted, and that the music and everything else is ready.

A prayer before the service:

> Lord Jesus Christ, You have called me through Your people to serve them with Your Word today. Forgive my sins, quiet my fears, and keep me faithful to what You have given me to say. Open our ears to Your Word, strengthen our faith, and receive our prayers and praise. Let Your people hear Your voice and take comfort in Your promises. Amen.

Follow the order printed in the bulletin:

1. Opening hymn and invocation: Begin with the opening hymn. After it, ask the congregation to rise if needed, then speak the invocation: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

2. Confession of sins and absolution: Read the leader's invitation and responses at an unhurried pace, leaving room for the congregation's replies. Lead the confession, then speak the printed absolution. These words direct the congregation to God's forgiveness in Christ.

3. Psalm and songs of praise: Lead the responsive Psalm of the Day, allowing the congregation to speak its portions. Continue with the Gloria Patri, Kyrie, and Gloria as printed. Coordinate the sung portions with your musician or person handling the recording.

4. Collect and Scripture readings: Say, "Let us pray," and read the Collect for the Day. Introduce and read the First and Second Scripture Readings as printed. Read clearly enough for people to hear and follow the words; there is no need to hurry through them.

5. Creed, hymn, and sermon: Join the congregation in confessing the Apostles' Creed, then proceed to the hymn. Introduce and read the sermon. Become familiar with it beforehand so you can communicate its meaning naturally. At its conclusion, follow the

bulletin's direction for the congregation to rise and speak the printed words of peace.

6. Offertory (this is the brief hymn verse that follows the sermon) and offering: Continue with the Offertory. Then invite the congregation to sit. Follow your congregation's practice for collecting the offering or directing people to the offering plate.

7. Hymn and prayers: Proceed to the next hymn. Read the General Prayer, including any appropriate local petitions that have been prepared. Then lead the congregation in the Lord's Prayer.

8. Communion, when scheduled: The Lord's Supper may be celebrated at this point. Ministry by Mail provides an order of Holy Communion, or you may use the order your congregation has chosen. Follow your congregation's arrangements for administering the Sacrament. The next section of this manual will address Communion in detail.

9. Final hymn, benediction, and announcements: Lead the final hymn. Ask the congregation to rise if needed, and speak the benediction printed in the bulletin. Give the announcements afterward, as shown in this order of service.

If you lose your place, pause and find it. A calm pause does no harm. Your task is to place God's Word before his people clearly and faithfully; its power does not depend on a flawless performance.